

FACT SHEET: The Healthy Families Act

Today, 43 million private-sector workers do not have access to paid sick days. That forces many Americans to make the difficult choice of losing a day's pay – and in some cases losing their job – or showing up to work sick and potentially spreading an illness to others. Even when workers have personal sick days, those might not cover the times when a child is ill and needs to stay home from school. That forces many parents to make the impossible choice of caring for their family or risking their livelihood.

The Healthy Families Act would allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year to care for a family member and to address personal medical needs. This legislation will help workers and increase economic security, while taking an important step toward making sure our economy works for all families, not just the wealthiest few.

The Act will help families care for their loved ones and themselves.

- Under this legislation, workers can earn up to 56 hours (seven days) of paid sick time. Workers earn one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked.
- Workers can use this time to stay home and get well when they are ill, to care for a sick family member, to seek routine medical care, or seek assistance related to domestic violence.

Access to paid sick days will help protect public health.

- Workers earning low wages are the least likely to have paid sick days, and are often unable to afford to take a day off when they are ill. This can pose public health risks because many low-wage jobs require interaction with the public, for example, caring for seniors or children, working in stores and hotels, or serving or preparing food in restaurants.
- Research has shown that paid sick days can reduce the spread of contagious illnesses like the flu, reduce occupational injuries, result in more preventive cancer screenings and other preventive care, and reduce unnecessary visits to the emergency room. For example, the American Journal of Public Health found that the lack of paid sick days contributed to an additional 5,000,000 cases of influenza-like illness during the H1N1 pandemic of 2009.

Expanding access to paid sick days will help families, businesses, and the economy.

- According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, if all workers had access to paid sick days, emergency room visits would decline by 1.3 million visits a year, saving \$1.1 billion annually. More than half of those savings would be to public health insurance programs like Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Nearly 20 states and localities have adopted policies that allow workers to earn paid sick days, including San Francisco, Seattle, and Connecticut, without posing adverse effects on businesses and the economy. Many employers in these localities expressed strong support for paid sick leave policies.

The Healthy Families Act provides important protections for workers and public health in a way that works for employers.

- Small employers with fewer than 15 employees would not be required to provide paid sick days.
- Employers that already provide this leave will not have to change their current policies, as long as their existing leave can be used for the same purposes described in the Act.
- Employers can require workers to provide documentation supporting any request for leave longer than three consecutive days.